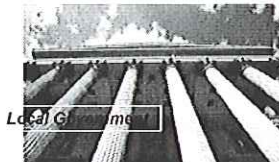




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SUNSHINE TRAINING



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THE "SUNSHINE" LAW

*119.01 General state policy on public records -
(1) It is the policy of this state that all state, county, and
municipal records are open for personal inspection and
copying by any person. Providing access to public records is a
duty of each agency.*

— [Florida Statute, Chapter 119.01](#)

To assist the public and governmental agencies in understanding the requirements and exemptions to Florida's open government laws, the Attorney General's Office compiles a comprehensive guide known as the Government-in-the-Sunshine manual. The manual is published each year at no taxpayer expense by the First Amendment Foundation in Tallahassee.

Florida is renowned for putting a high priority on the public's right of access to governmental meetings and records. In fact, the principles of open government are not only embodied in Florida statutes, but also are guaranteed in the state Constitution.

Florida began its tradition of openness back in 1909 with the passage of what has come to be known as the "Public Records Law," Chapter 119 of the Florida Statutes. This law provides that any records made or received by any public agency in the course of its official business are available for inspection, unless specifically exempted by the Florida Legislature. Over the years, the definition of what constitutes "public records" has come to include not just traditional written documents such as papers, maps and books, but also tapes, photographs, film, sound recordings and records stored in computers.

Florida's Government-in-the-Sunshine Law was enacted in 1967. Today, the Sunshine Law can be found in [Chapter 286](#) of the Florida Statutes. The Sunshine Law establishes a basic right of access to most meetings of boards, commissions and other governing bodies of state and local governmental agencies or authorities.

Throughout the history of Florida's open government, its courts have consistently supported the public's right of access to governmental meetings and records. As such, they also have been defining and redefining what a public record is and who is covered under the open meetings law. One area of public concern was whether or not the Legislature was covered under the open meetings requirements. To address that concern, a Constitutional amendment was passed overwhelmingly by the voters in 1990 providing for open meetings in the legislative branch of government.

The Attorney General's Office has consistently sought to safeguard Florida's pioneering Government-in-the-Sunshine laws. Our attorneys have worked, both in the courtroom and out, to halt public records violations. In 1991, a decision by the Florida Supreme Court raised questions which made it clear that the best way to ensure the public's right of access to all three branches of government was to secure that right through the Florida Constitution. The Attorney General's Office then drafted a definitive constitutional amendment, the successful passage of which in 1992 not only guaranteed continued openness in the state's government, but also in effect reaffirmed the application of open government to the legislative branch and expanded it to the judiciary.

Florida voters have overwhelmingly showed their support for government in the sunshine at all levels of government. They have made it clear they believe that open government provides the best assurance of government that is responsive and responsible to the needs of the people.

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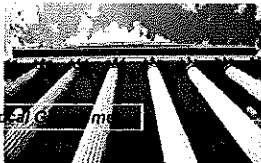
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GOVERNMENT-IN-THE-SUNSHINE MANUAL

[Download an Abridged Edition \(PDF\)](#)

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The electronic edition of the manual is an abridged version of the 2010 Government-in-the-Sunshine Manual and reflects changes to the statutes and caselaw which occurred prior to October 2009.

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